CLAIMS:

1. A skid assembly (16) for securement to the underside of a freight container (11), in order to assist the slidable loading and unloading of the container relative to a loading platform, said container having upper and lower corner fittings (12, 13) to enable the container to be clamped to one or more adjacent container(s) and / or support surfaces, and the skid assembly (16) being arranged to be capable of extending between a pair of lower corner fittings (13) and to be securable thereto in order to secure the skid assembly to the underside of the container, in which the skid assembly comprises:

   an elongate support (20) having upper and lower support surfaces, and lower support surface being engageable with a loading platform, and the upper support surface being engageable with the underside (27) of the container (11); and

   a pair of clamping devices (21) mounted one adjacent to each end of the elongate support (20) and engageable with a respective one of the pair of lower corner fittings (13) to secure the skid assembly (16) to the underside (27) of the container (11).

2. A skid assembly according to claim 1, comprising a metal fabrication, including hollow sections (22, 23).

3. A skid assembly according to claim 2, in which at least some of the hollow sections (22, 23) are filled with structural foam to increase the strength of the sections and resistance to bending loads, and also to distribute loads whilst minimising overall weight.

4. A skid assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, and including two longitudinally extending load-bearing surfaces, a first (22) of which is intended to engage and to support the lower surface of the pair of lower corner fittings (13) and a second (24, 25, 26) of which is laterally spaced from the first surface (22)

and which is intended to engage and to support the underside (27) of the base of the container (11).

5. A skid assembly according to claim 4, in which the second load bearing surface (26) is at a slightly raised level relative to the first load bearing surface (22) so that it can engage with the base (27) of the container (11).

6. A skid assembly according to claim 4 or 5, in which a load transfer pad (26) forms the second load-bearing surface.

7. A skid assembly according to claim 6, in which the pad (26) comprises a longitudinal strip of resiliently deformable material, e.g. a rubber pad, which is secured to the upper surface of the skid assembly.

8. A skid assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, in which the elongate support (20) is fabricated in two parts (33, 34) which are longitudinally adjustable to vary the overall length of the skid assembly.

9. A skid assembly according to claim 8, in which the two parts (33, 34) are telescopically adjustable.

10. A skid assembly according to claim 8 or 9, in which a locking mechanism is provided to lock the two parts (33, 34) in any required position of lengthwise adjustment.

11. A skid assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, and comprising a main wide box section (22), and a pair of narrower hollow sections (23) each running longitudinally along a respective one of the opposed longitudinal sides of the main section (22).

12. A skid assembly according to claim 11, in which one of the hollow sections (23) has a support section (24) secured thereto, which is generally triangular in cross

section, and of which an upper and horizontal side (25) has the load-bearing pad secured thereto.

13. A skid assembly according to claim 12, in which the other hollow section (22) has a number of lateral projections (30) secured thereto, and spaced apart longitudinally to define locking spaces (31) therebetween, into which fastening bolts on the loading platform can engage to restrain the skid assembly longitudinally.

14. A skid assembly according to claim 13, in which the lateral projections (30) comprise wear resistance sliding portions, engageable slidingly with guides (33) provided on the loading platform of an aircraft.

15. A skid assembly according to any one of the preceding claims, in which each clamping device has a rotatable clamping head (35) which is biased to a retaining position, but which is moveable against the biasing to an entry position in which the head (35) can enter the respective corner fitting (13).

16. A skid assembly according to claim 15, in which the heads (35) are shaped so as to be engageable by the edge of the entrance aperture to the corner fitting (when the heads are in the engaged position), and thereby to be moved to the entry position.

17. A container (11) supported by a pair of skid assemblies (16), to enable the container to be loaded and unloaded by slidable movement of the skid assemblies (16) over rollers (18) built into the loading platform (17).